



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Khote (Chair)  
Councillor Thalukdar (Vice-Chair)

In Attendance:

Councillor Govind  
Councillor Solanki  
Councillor Joshi

Also Present:

Councillor Master

\* \* \* \* \*

**13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received for Councillor Ali and Councillor Aqbany.

**14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

**16. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

**17. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no questions, representations

or statements of case received.

## **18. LIBRARY SERVICES - READING PROGRAMMES**

The Head of Neighbourhood Services delivered a presentation of an overview of the Library Services Provision.

Members of the Commission were asked to note the presentation.

The Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhoods noted that it was very important that the message was spread on the range of activities available in Neighbourhood Services and thanked the Chair for the item on the agenda.

Members in attendance from the Children, Young Peoples and Schools Scrutiny Commission were pleased to hear the opportunity that the service were providing for people of all ages and backgrounds.

In discussion Members of the Commission felt reassured with the range of work taking place within the cities libraries and felt this work should continue as it played a very important part in the development of children. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Services has had a positive impact around the city and that various locations were well attended by locals using the different facilities available.

The Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhoods noted that with the abundance of excellent work being delivered, the Service were committed to delivering the best and maintaining that. Although the service had gone through significant spending reviews, they have been resilient and made sure that the staff and services were in a strong position to continue delivering the fantastic services.

Members of the Commission suggested that if events programmes were shared with Members detailing what is on in respective wards, this would give them the opportunity to also participate.

Members of the Commission raised their concerns on how the service was reaching the children from hard to reach communities many of whom don't have English as their first language. It was noted that there is a book bus available that has set stops on a 4-day rota basis. Although these routes were reviewed, the service planned to keep these routes as they were, as regularity was important for the development of children. The bus visited areas where there was a high need and where children may not be able to travel to their local library facility.

The service had a range of suppliers with a range of reading material available to suit the needs of customers' preferred languages. It was noted that older people in some communities preferred books and material in different languages, this was based on feedback received and evidence of current borrowing habits at different libraries.

It was noted that the service worked with a range of partners to run the initiative of getting every child reading. The Book Start Project provided an information

pack that went to every new-born child and the service worked alongside the schools in the city to identify young vulnerable children and provided them with book packs and library cards.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Head of Neighbourhood Services be requested to provide Members with programmes of events at libraries; and
- 2) That the presentation be noted.

## **19. UNIVERSAL CREDIT IMPACTS - ONE YEAR ON**

The Director of Finance submitted a report updating the Commission on Universal Credit full service and its impact, one year on.

The report was introduced and the key points were highlighted. Members were asked to note the report.

During the discussion it was noted that:

- As the process for applying for Universal Credit (UC) was all online there were digital support sessions available, this was predominantly at the Job Centre throughout the day. The Job Centre provided a floor walker service that was available to all those who required assistance with making their claim.
- The Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS) also provided set service sessions to support applicants across its 10 different sites. Information on these sessions were sent to Councillors on a quarterly basis. It was noted that the demand for these sessions changed as the service changed. Members suggested that the dates of these sessions be kept consistent at appropriate locations around the city to target the vulnerable communities who require the service the most.
- With the 5 weeks waiting period prior to payment, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had introduced the Universal Credit Advance. The DWP assured local authorities that this was an advance payment paid to all who seek the advance. The advance payment was interest free and was paid back to the DWP in the first year. Other discretionary payments such as Council Tax discretions were also available and were well advertised to claimants.
- It was noted that although the change had a huge impact on the welfare system there were positives. Members of the Commission felt that staff at the Job Centre and LASALS were very accommodating and supportive with applicants.
- Concerns were raised with the element of rent. As claimants were payed directly rather than landlords, Members felt this could be problematic and could lead to tenants falling behind on rent. Members were aware that this was something that could be altered but felt that Housing Associations were very slow in authorising this change.
- Members were assured that the number of tenants on the Council's own housing stock in arrears was 30%, of which there were a small proportion who were in arrears in high figures. Leicester City Council had invested in additional Tenancy Management Officers to manage this area and the

experience so far was that, generally people were managing the transition well.

- As a result of reductions in grant funding, the service were adjusting the way it did things and were shifting towards the digital channel as much as possible but recognising that face to face and telephony support needed to continue to be provided to vulnerable customers.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

## **20. DRAFT SCOPE PROPOSAL FOR NEW REVIEW TOPIC: "THE VIABILITY OF A COMMUNITY LOTTERY FOR LEICESTER"**

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission submitted a draft scope proposal for a new review topic and proposed to set up a task group to further investigate the viability of a community lottery.

It was noted that the scope document sets out the process in which the evidence would be gathered. Following this a report would be put together which would be brought to the Commission for consideration before going to the Executive.

The Chair had an amendment she required to be made to the scope document on page 69, box 4, purpose and aims: the word 'moral' to be changed to 'ethical'.

The Lead Director noted that although there are many authorities that host community lotteries, many of these were district council's and only two were unitary authorities that she was aware of. It was further noted that if the community lottery were to go ahead the authority would have to apply for a gambling licence.

Members of the Commission showed their support for participating in the task group and evidence gathering meetings. The Scrutiny Policy Officer would arrange task group dates and forward these to the Members of the Commission.

AGREED:

That the Members of the Commission be requested to support the scope and review to take place.

## **21. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair advised that the Members of the Commission were to share any suggested items for the work programme for future meetings with the Chair or the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

AGREED:

That the work programme be noted.

# Minute Item 18

## Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission



Library services provision – improving literacy for children and families through neighbourhood based reading programmes

## Neighbourhood Services Overview

The Council's Neighbourhood Services section delivers community and library services to people who live and work in Leicester City.

- A network of 28 facilities, including 9 Multi-Service centres:
- 16 library service points
- 16 community centres offering room hire
- Ward & Community Engagement Team





# Library reading programmes: national and local strategic context

Neighbourhood Services are committed to the Universal Offers developed by Libraries Connected and supported Arts Council England:

- **Reading** – Goal: “To help create a more literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting reading activities in Neighbourhood facilities”

Other Universal Offers are linked:

- **Health**
- **Culture**
- **Digital**



## Reading: The National Context

“Reading and literacy are two of the most fundamental skills in life...

Reading for pleasure is important. Research suggests that both children and adults who do this are healthier, happier and more confident than those who don't. Libraries contribute to this by running reading programmes, hosting book clubs, and by providing advice and guidance to help people extend and develop their reading choices”



# Leicester City context

Manifesto commitment May 2019

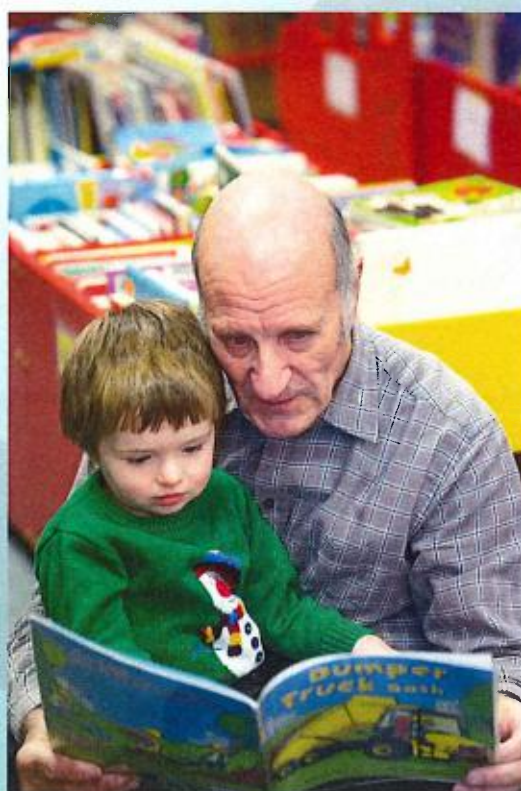
“We will work to ensure that all children grow up in homes with books for them to read and enjoy, including multi lingual texts”

“We will expand our reading projects – Our Best Book, Reading Rampage and the summer reading challenge”

## Leicester Libraries

Delivery team and network:

- 16 libraries
- 12 Children & Young People & Family Centres
- 2 Bookbuses
- Library Children & Young People's Team
- Total visits to Neighbourhood Services 2018/19: 2.3million
- 50.6% of all book loans to under 16yrs
- Library Users – 52 % under 16yrs





# Libraries: Reading core offer

- Provision of quality book stock for all ages and backgrounds.
- City-wide reading events programme
- Toddler Time (under 5s) weekly sessions
- Family focus – promotion of reading from the very earliest years to create lifelong readers
- Complementing work undertaken by schools – promoting reading for pleasure
- Study support at 11 libraries



## Reading Programmes: Early Years and Bookstart

Focus: developing language and pre-reading skills

- Bookstart programme
  - Over £200,000 of books & resources received through Book Trust
  - Book gifting to babies
  - through Health visitors
  - Leicester's reach for distribution of packs is 93%
  - Book corner – targeted interventions
- Foundation Stage
  - Sharing books at home
  - Treasure Box Gifting – Early Years Settings – 94% delivery
  - Packs delivered through Foundation Stage 2 settings
  - Time to read – (delivered in 68 foundation settings)





# Primary school children: Our Best Book

## Our Best Book

- Developed and led by Leicester Libraries
- Four aims:
  - Inspire and motivate children in Year 5 or Year 6 to be active readers
  - Develop and support reading for pleasure
  - Develop awareness of new titles/authors
  - Provide schools with multiple copies of great accessible books
- Key transition period for children's reading
- 44 city primary schools participated 2019
- 2,500 yrs 5/6 children participated
- Funded by contribution from each school



## Our Best Book

- Development – Our Best Picture Book Jan 2020
  - Led by Whatever It Takes (WIT) reading campaign - Will focus on KS1 children
  - Pilot 10 schools
  - Parents involved in voting for best picture book



# Secondary Schools

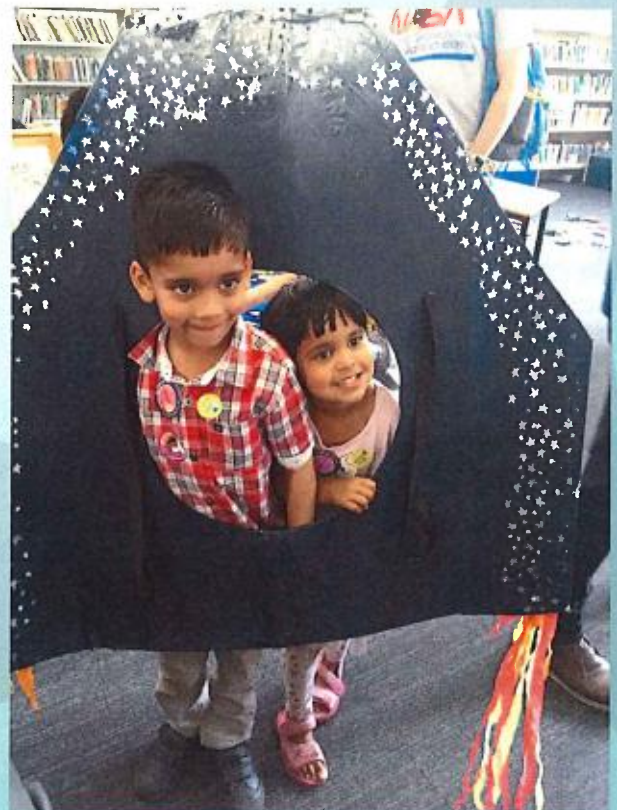
## Reading Rampage

- Read it, rate it, pass it on!
- 16 Schools took part 2018-19
- Approximately 2,000 students
- Libraries a delivery partner
- Based on Our Best Book format
- Books are available in schools and libraries
- Book lists published by Libraries



# Children's Summer Scheme

- Crucial intervention to prevent the summer "reading dip"
- National Summer Scheme developed by Reading Agency
- Leicester City delivers an expanded local scheme through partnership working
- East Midlands cities:  
Participation 2018
  - Leicester City 6837
  - Nottingham City 3236
  - Derby City 2141





# Summer Reading Challenge 2019: “Space Chase”

- Target participation: 7000 children already exceeded
- Summer Reading Challenge – read 6 books over the summer and collect rewards!
- Programme of Activities at ALL city libraries to increase engagement
- Family Fun Days
- Partners
  - Schools
  - Children, Young People and Family Centres
  - Spark Arts
  - National Space centre
  - Curve
  - Festivals
  - Public Health
- Strong volunteer support (approx. 40 volunteers in libraries)



## Family Reading Programmes

- Summer Scheme for Adults!
  - Space to Read
- Everybody’s Reading Programme
  - Celebration of reading in and around Leicester neighbourhoods and communities
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October
  - Neighbourhood Services key partner
  - 35 reading based events in libraries & community centres
- Joint projects with LASALS Family Learning eg School Readiness Programme and Prison family visits
- Leicester Writers Showcase
  - Create a space to engage Leicester writers with their local readership
  - Monthly event at Central Library
  - Role of libraries: from reading to writing
- Jimmy’s Book Club
- Reading groups – eg Westcotes Reading Group formed from friends meeting at Toddler Time





# Creative & Cultural Programmes

Bringing reading and language to life

- Imaginative Neighbourhoods projects
  - Arts Council funded (4 x £90k projects)
  - Working in partnership with Spark Arts
  - Targeted interventions within Neighbourhoods
  - Artists in residence
- Among Ideal Friends - Touring performances
  - High quality performances in local libraries and community centres
  - Regional approach working with east midlands library authorities
  - Girl of Ink and Stars Summer 2019



## Impact

Our Best Book – Teachers:

“Our Best Book has hugely impacted upon the children’s reading. Their attitude towards reading has positively improved, most notably amongst boys. I believe this is related to the ‘male friendly’ books”

“...the impact of the ‘Best Book scheme’ has encouraged children to take ownership over what they read and given them a purpose for reading for pleasure other than being told to.”

“Our Best Book has inspired even the most reluctant readers to pick up a book and develop reading for pleasure.”



